## AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as indicated below.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 15, as follows:

The Internet has connected the world with literally billions of connected nodes (or users) representing entities of various types,--people, organisations, computers, and other devices. Many ~~applications~~ <u>solutions</u> such as the world wide web, online bulletin boards, email, online instant messaging, and peer-to-peer solutions allow direct contact between any number of these nodes. The very success of this inter-node connectivity/accessibility has however lead to further problems where a node/entity would prefer to control its `visibility` and accessibility to a subset of the potential world-wide internet community, for any number of reasons, e.g. discretion, trust, association, preference, improving the quality and relevance of information and so forth.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 3, as follows:

Existing means of addressing this problem include specific ~~application~~ <u>implementation</u> web-sites configurations. These typically require secure access using authentication, with an associated increase in costs, maintenance, administration and lack of flexibility. Specific emails and/or direct telephone contact is often employed, though these require time and effort to implement.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 9, as follows:

There is therefore a need for a system where nodes/entities can still interact with a wide range of ~~applications~~ <u>implementations</u> and other nodes/entities via any appropriate communication methods, whilst providing control over the distribution of information flow

between the nodes and also the degree of `visibility` of the node/entity, i.e. the degree to which information flow and/or the interconnection between nodes in a user's unique private personal network is discernable to other nodes.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 5, as follows:

Examples of just a few ~~applications~~ <u>embodiments</u> or activities in which trusted or respected contacts or recommendations play a significant role include seeking employment and filling job vacancies, investment opportunities, academic co-operation, finding accommodation or people to share accommodation with, buying and selling goods and services, arranging social/sporting functions, finding friendship, romantic and/or social relationships and so forth.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 10, as follows:

There are thus numerous possible ~~applications~~ <u>embodiments</u> that could benefit from a discriminating means of forming a network of contacts with entities of known value to the user.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 23, as follows:

Nevertheless, employers are still confronted by numerous deficiencies in the existing alternatives to finding an employee. As discussed above, advertising via traditional media outlets such as the newspapers, magazines and so forth can produce an excessive number of applicants. The filtering required to shortlist candidates for interview may be based on misleading impressions formed from Curriculum Vitas, formal qualifications, age, experience and so forth. Furthermore, the cost of the advertising itself together with the processing cost of all the low quality ~~applications~~ <u>enquires</u> can be a significant burden.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 22, as follows:

Potential ~~applications~~ <u>implementations</u> which may benefit from such a system are potentially limitless and the above are given solely by way of example.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 2, as follows:

According to one aspect, the present invention provides ~~system providing one or more~~ ~~users with a unique, private personal network formed from contacts with one or more entities~~ ~~known directly or indirectly to the user, characterised in that said unique private personal~~ ~~network provides respective interrelationship context information associated between at least two~~ ~~entities and/or between an entity and the user~~ <u>a social network system and method of operation</u> <u>including; at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a</u> <u>database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to</u> <u>said data network, said system configured to provided each user entity with a virtual, unique,</u> <u>private, personal, social network (herein a 'social network') formed from connections between</u> <u>contacts, said contacts being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, said social</u> <u>network further providing respective interrelationship context information associated with a</u> <u>connection between at least two contacts and/or between a contact and said user.</u>

Please add the following new paragraphs and headings before page 11, line 7, as follows:

According to a further aspect, the present invention provides a social network system and method of operation including: at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to said data network, said system configured to provided each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts, said

contacts being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, wherein said social network is configured to implement applications allowing individual user entities to at least partially define at least one of:

the user's participation and degree of interaction in said application;

the user's visibility and/or accessibility to other contacts or entities with respect to said application; and/or

the user's role in said application.

According to a further aspect, the present invention provides a social network system and method of operation including: at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to said data network, said system configured to provided each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts, said contacts being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, wherein said social network is configured to:

provide respective interrelationship context information associated with a connection between at least two contacts and/or between a contact and said user, said interrelationship context information including a connection factor indicative of the degree of separation between a contact and the user, said connection factor incorporating a connection path length between two contacts, given by the number of connections N in a chain of contacts separating two contacts and;

allow a user entity to apply a selective interaction with other contacts for a predetermined activity by controlling the value of Nth degrees of connections separating the user from a contact to be included, where N is a variable determined by the user.

According to a further aspect, the present invention provides a social network system and

method of operation including: at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to said data network, said system configured to provided each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts, said contacts being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, wherein said social network is configured to implement applications allowing individual user entities to perform one or more roles, wherein said roles include:

a provider, being an entity providing a tangible or intangible item, element, issue or service made available to at least one other entity; and

a participant, being an entity utilising said provider's tangible or intangible item, element, issue or service.

According to a further aspect, the present invention provides a method of creating a unique private personal social network for a user entity using a system including at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to said data network,

said system being configured by said method to provide each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts, being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, said method including the steps of:

said system receiving a user entity data input including at least one identifying characteristic of the user entity and recording said data input in a corresponding entity data record;

said system receiving a further user entity data input including at least one identifying characteristic of one or more entities known directly or indirectly to said user entity and chosen by said user entity for invitation to the user entity's social network as a contact;

communicating said invitation to said chosen entities;

recording each consenting entity accepting said invitation as a new contact connected to the user entity and storing at least the identifying characteristic of each new contact in a corresponding database entity data record;

repeating the above steps for each consenting entity to create corresponding individual, unique, private, personnel social networks, collectively forming a plurality of social networks on said system, inter-connected by mutually connected contacts;

providing searchable access to at least part of the entity data records stored in said database.

According to a further aspect, the present invention provides a  social network software application configured for implementation with a social network system including: at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to said data network, said system configured to provided each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts, said contacts being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, wherein said social network application is configured to allow individual user entities to at least partially define at least one of:

the user entity's participation and degree of interaction in said application;

the user entity's visibility and/or accessibility to other contacts or entities with respect to said application; and/or

the user entity's role in said application.


## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Further aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following

7

description which is given by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a schematic block diagram of a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 shows a first embodiment flow chart implementation of the invention shown in figure 1;

Figure 3 shows a web page forming part of the first preferred embodiment;

Figure 4 shows an e-mail forming part of the first preferred embodiment;

Figure 5 shows a web page forming part of a second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 6 shows a web page forming part of the second preferred embodiment listing employment search results;

Figure 7 shows a web page of an expanded job description of the results shown in figure 6;

Figure 8 shows a user profile update according to the present invention;

Figure 9 shows a web page form for inputting details of vacancy according to said second preferred embodiment;

Figure 10 shows an invitation message template according to the second preferred embodiment;

Figure 11 shows a visual indication of a network of connected individuals highlighting two interconnected unique personal networks of first order friendships; and

Figure 12 shows the network displayed in figure 11 with a single user's second, third and fourth degree connections highlighted.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As discussed above, the present invention may be implemented in numerous forms and embodiments. However, common to each embodiment is a social network system including; at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to said data network, said system configured to provided each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network (herein a 'social network') formed from connections between contacts, said contacts being entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 10, as follows:

By being private, the <u>social</u> network prevents unrestricted access to the information and <u>the user entity's</u> contacts contained therein, filtering out unwanted approaches by unauthorised entities.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 21, as follows:

Preferably, said interrelationship context information includes a connection factor indicative of the separation between an entity <u>contact</u> and the user <u>entity</u>, and optionally also the separation between ~~entities~~ <u>contacts</u> in said <u>user entity's social</u> ~~unique private personal~~ network.

Please add the following new paragraph before page 12, line 1, as follows:

Preferably, said identifying characteristics of an entity encompasses any communication means capable of individually communicating with said entity including, but not limited to, the entities name and preferably a means of contacting the entity, preferably including an e-mail address; telephone and/or facsimile number; postal address an/or any combination of such means.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 1, as follows:

The interrelationship context information optionally includes details of one or more entity attributes. Therefore, in addition to the user's knowledge that another entity is a direct ~~acquaintance~~ <u>contact</u> (i.e. there is no intermediary between the entity and the user <u>entity</u>) or knowledge of the connections via which the entity is indirectly known<u>/connected</u> to the user (i.e. the connection factor), further interrelationship context information may be available via details of any corresponding entity attributes made available to the user.

Please add the following new paragraph before page 12, line 7, as follows:

It is thus axiomatic that said interrelationship context information self-explanatorily provides information about the context of the interrelationship between a connection between at least two contacts and/or between a contact and said user.   More specifically, and in summary of the above, said interrelationship context information includes at least one:

entity attribute;

entity identifying characteristic; and/or

a connection factor indicative of the separation between two contacts and/or between a contact and the user.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 7, as follows:

It will be appreciated that there is a distinct difference in the present invention between organised networks and unique, private personal <u>social</u> networks. An organised network forms a group/organisation with a defined membership who all have a common aim, or interest such as, political parties, academic or engineering institutes, sporting bodies and so forth.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 11, as follows:

In contrast, a unique, private personal <u>social</u> network is formed from <u>a combination of</u> contacts that are unique to an individual with entities such as friends and colleagues. Thus, an individual user <u>entity</u> of the present invention may be linked to other <u>user</u> entity's unique, private personal <u>social</u> networks and be linked to (or even be a member of) organised networks.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 17, as follows:

Thus, an organised network may be connected to a user's unique ~~private personal~~ <u>social</u> network as;

a single entity with entity attributes relating to the whole organised network, and/or

as a plurality of entities comprising the membership of the organised network, whereby each such entity would each posses at least the common entity attribute of membership of the organised network.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 5, as follows:

Entities, including the user <u>entity</u> may be considered as "nodes" in a network.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 6, as follows:

The invention provides a unique, private personal network with a plurality ~~of number~~ of users or entities represented as nodes, each node being at the origin of an individual unique, private personal network consisting of the user and a variable number of additional nodes.

Please add the following new paragraphs before page 13, line 14, as follows:

11

According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a means of visually displaying the interconnections between the nodes.

Preferably, a user's unique, private personal network may be visually represented on an electronic display in one or more of the following forms, including:

graphical, alphanumeric and/or animated symbols representing nodes joined by lines, or some form of visual link representing the connections between the nodes;

a solid line indicating entities who have joined or have consented to join the user's unique, private personal network;

dotted lines indicating entities who have been invited but they have not joined the user's unique, private personal network;

different symbols to differentiate between nodes representing different types of entities;

different symbols to depict nodes representing entities who are individuals and those representing organisations;

symbols at least partially resembling people to depict nodes representing actual individuals;

different symbols, colours, animations and/or sounds for a node to indicate the existence of defined information of interest including a particular predetermined activity, identifying characteristic, entity attribute, or other data recorded in a nodes data record;

different colours/symbols for different roles in a specific application, such as in an employment application for employers and job seekers and/or the existence of a link to details of a job vacancy;

displaying further defined information of interest or permitted actions when positioning a cursor or visual indicator over a node depending, and varying the information displayed depending on the user's degree of separation from the node;

nodes representing a person or an organised network also showing a numerical indication of the number of direct contacts associated with the node;

a indicative rather than literal indication of the number of links to a node if number exceeds a defined value, with a numerical value showing the actual number of connections;

user customisable representations for nodes, including images, photographs and figures; and

different visual appearance of a node symbol to indicate the status of an activity, e.g. a higher intensity symbol indicating a successful linking of a job seeker with a vacancy.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 19, as follows:

Preferably, a ~~node~~ entity becomes ~~part of~~ a contact in the social network system by independent registration or by accepting an invitation from a user entity to become a contact directly connected to the user entity ~~registered node~~.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 21, as follows:

~~Nodes~~ Entities agreeing to inclusion in a user's unique, private personal social network are said to be direct contacts.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 1, as follows:

According to one embodiment, ~~nodes~~ entities included in the database system which are indirectly or unconnected to a user entity may become directly connected by mutual agreement, preferably by one ~~node~~ entity sending an invitation and the other accepting.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 4, as follows:

As referred to herein, if two ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> are linked through any number of intermediate ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> they are said to be "connected". Furthermore, if two ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> exist independently in the database system or ~~a unique, private personal~~ <u>an individual user entity's social</u> network with no intermediate ~~nodes~~ connecting <u>entities</u> ~~them, they~~ are said to be "disconnected".

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 8, as follows:

In one embodiment, the ~~said~~ connection factor incorporates the connection path length between two ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u>, given by the number of connections in a chain of ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u> separating two ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u>.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 11, as follows:

In a further embodiment, the ~~said~~ connection factor incorporates the degree of separation between two ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u> and is equal to the shortest connection path length of all the available connection paths between the ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u>, wherein a ~~node that is~~ <u>direct contact</u> directly connected to another ~~node~~ <u>contact</u> is ~~said to be a "direct contact" giving~~ a "1$^{st}$ degree contact," and has a connection path length of one, two ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u> connected via one intermediate ~~node~~ <u>contact</u> are said to be "2$^{nd}$ degree contacts," and have a connection path length of two, and wherein any two ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u> whose shortest connection path is via "N-1" ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u>, with a path length of "N" have an "N$^{th}$" degree contact, where "N" is an integer.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 19, as follows:

According to one embodiment, an application or communication is initiated by one or more ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u>, and responded to by one or more further ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u>. According to a

further embodiment, users may search for other ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> that desire to conduct an application or communication, optionally selecting to be notified of future such events.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 1, as follows:

According to one embodiment, the present invention is configured to allow a user <u>entity</u> to apply a selective interaction with other ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> for a predetermined activity by controlling the value of $N^{th}$ degrees <u>of connections separating the user from a</u> contact ~~of nodes~~ to be included, where N is a variable determined by the user.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 7, as follows:

Alternatively, a user engaged in one or more said predetermined activities may specify the ~~action~~ <u>activity</u> to apply to<u>:</u>

all degrees of contact in the user's unique, private personal network, at any connection path length, or

the entire system network of all ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u>, including those who are not connected to the user.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 12, as follows:

Preferably, said applications include (but are not limited to) consumer decisions, buying, selling, trading<u>,</u> loaning; finding flatmates/roommates, tenants; organising activities and events, recommendations/opinions including those related to films, plays, books, employment, services, tradesmen, accommodation, restaurants and the like, comparison and explorations of common interests, e.g. horse riding, snowboarding, etc; sharing peer-to-peer personal or business creative work or content, e.g. photos, art-work, literature, music; managing a club or society;

locating/supplying/"blacklisting" providers of goods or services; business or technological advice

unsuitable for publication; recruitment, job-seeking; estate agents; venture capital; collaborative

ventures; referrals; police/security information gathering/informants; event manager; address

book manager; search engines; headhunting; book mark service; spam filtering; car sharing; sales

leads; market entry advice; real-estate; sharing personal or business files; company knowledge

management; medical advice; travel organiser, lending/borrowing; house-sitting; baby-sitting;

classified advertisements; finding musicians.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 5, as follows:

This control over information distribution allows the ~~nodes~~ <u>user entities</u> to balance the

trade-off between the amount of visibility of the application or communication or search in their

~~unique, private personal~~ <u>social</u> network, and the degrees of separation between the ~~node~~ <u>user</u>

<u>entity</u> and potential initiating or responding <u>entities</u> ~~nodes~~.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 9, as follows:

It will be appreciated that there are numerous potential reasons for limiting the degrees of

separation of <u>entities</u> ~~nodes~~ contacted by the user for any predetermined activity, said reasons

including, but are not limited to, social, economic, or political contexts such as trust, discretion,

interest, association, preference, shared experience, ethnicity, religion, language, location,

allegiance, alliance, treaty, politics, or government.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 14, as follows:

According to a further aspect of the present invention, access to at least a portion of ~~the~~

said identifying characteristics of each <u>entity</u> ~~node~~ is restricted, optionally as a function of the

connection factor.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 17, as follows:

In one embodiment, each <u>user entity</u> ~~node~~ may only access the name and contact details of direct contacts in its ~~unique, private personal~~ <u>social</u> network. Optionally, each <u>user entity</u> ~~node~~ can see for each of its direct contacts the number of direct contacts that they have, in order to recognise which of their contacts are successful and which are not in connecting to others, and to prompt them.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 21, as follows:

Optionally, a ~~node~~ <u>user entity</u> can only see the number or partial name of <u>contacts</u> ~~nodes~~ connected within each of the user's N degrees of contacts greater than the second degree of separation. This achieves two purposes, firstly it prevents <u>user entities</u> ~~nodes~~ from inviting other <u>entities</u> ~~nodes~~ to be direct contacts without the existence of an appropriate interrelationship context or relationship which predisposes the <u>entities</u> ~~nodes~~ to be direct contacts, and secondly, it still allows two <u>entities</u> ~~nodes~~ involved in an application, for example, to consult their direct <u>contacts</u> ~~contact entities~~ in the connection path that links them, and if necessary, their direct contacts can consult their direct contacts further into the linking connection path, to support the <u>entities</u> ~~nodes~~ use of the application.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 17, line 8, as follows:

In one embodiment, only a ~~user's~~ <u>user entity's</u> direct contact(s) are provided with the ~~user's~~ <u>user entity's</u> contact details enabling communication independently of the system.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 17, line 13, as follows:

This provides a yet further screen for users from direct interaction with entities with whom they are not yet totally familiar. If the situation changes and an entity becomes trusted, better known to the user, they may be upgraded to a direct contact and given the user's telephone number, email address or similar contact details. Alternatively, a user entity particularly concerned with privacy may exclude even their first degree contacts from accessing their contact details. All contact would then be via the system.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 17, line 19, as follows:

The assurance that email (or other communication means prone to include unsolicited messages/correspondence) from the user's ~~unique, private personal~~ social network comes from a defined list of entities whose knowledge of the user's contact details is controllable by the user entity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 1, as follows:

Thus, the present invention may be used as a filter for any form of electronic communication by prioritising communications from entities in the user's ~~unique, private personal~~ social network within a defined degree of separation, over other communications.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 4, as follows:

This effectively acts as a spam filter for e-mail, text messaging, voice mail, or any other means which identifies the communication's originator, which may then be compared with the ~~user's~~ entity's direct contacts ~~contact entities~~ for example.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 7, as follows:

In further embodiments, the user <u>entities</u> may selectively control access to the identifying characteristics of itself and<u>/</u>or, with consent, any ~~nodes~~ <u>contact</u> within a permitted degree of separation from the user <u>entity</u>. Preferably, said selective control is variable according on the predetermined activity being undertaken.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 11, as follows:

Although access to the identifying characteristics and connection paths of particular ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> may be restricted to <u>specific entities</u> ~~other nodes~~ according to the configuration settings of the system and/or ~~nodes~~ <u>entities</u> involved, nevertheless the system records and maintains these details.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 14, as follows:

Therefore, according to a further embodiment, the system automatically updates changes in the identifying characteristics, contact details, entity attributes, and any other data associated with and/or inputted by a ~~node~~ <u>user entity</u> and records same in entity data records associated with each entity~~/node~~.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 18, as follows:

Thus, according to a further aspect, the system automatically maintains connectivity between ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u> following changes in ~~a nodes~~ contact details and/or the integrity of any aspect of a predetermined activity dependant on the contents of said entity data records of the ~~nodes~~ <u>contacts</u> involved by virtue of said automatic updating.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 22, as follows:

In one embodiment, the system auto-synchronises the contact details of ~~entities~~ contacts

accessible to the user with electric contact details stored in any electronic or data storage media

connected to the system, e.g. address books in laptops, mobile phones, PC and so forth.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 19, line 1, as follows:

Preferably, after a user entity has formed its own ~~unique, private personal~~ social network,

it may vary the degree of separation of the ~~nodes~~ contacts to be involved in a predetermined

activity, without need to reconstruct the ~~unique, private personal~~ social network for each activity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 19, line 4, as follows:

Even if a ~~node~~ user entity is not active in building out its network of direct contacts, its

network may continue to evolve and grow or shrink depending on the invitation activity of other

~~nodes~~ contacts it is connected with.

Please delete page 19, line 7, through page 20, line 19, in its entirety.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 20, line 20, as follows:

The ~~said~~ system provides a platform for developers to provide the ~~nodes~~ user entity with

applications and communication services. The system may also be provided to the user entity

with an initial suite of specific applications and communication services.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 20, line 23, as follows:

There are clearly a myriad of possible applications where knowledge of a direct contact

~~with,~~ or recommendation by, a trusted entity will affect the decisions of a user entity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 21, line 2, as follows:

As an illustration, a commercial entity such as a multinational software producer may utilise a database composed of suppliers with a proven track record, e.g. secure credit history, prompt product delivery or low product faults. ~~These entities in~~ The user entity's 1st degree ~~contact with the user~~ may be asked for recommendations for further trade related entities, employment vacancies, collaboration request and so forth.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 21, line 11, as follows:

In addition to a ~~user's~~ entity's awareness of the degree of separation between themselves and a given entity~~/node~~, various other information regarding the personal details and/or activities of other entities in the user's ~~unique, private personal~~ social network may be searchable or otherwise made available to the user entity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 21, line 15, as follows:

Thus, the present invention also provides a user entity with searchable access to the system for information derived from a variety of sources, including that recorded in said data records, including the identifying characteristics, contact details, entity attributes, and said predetermined activities.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 22, line 5, as follows:

Optionally said chosen users may prohibit the recordal of any or all details stored or potentially stored in their respective ~~entity~~ user entity data record from being searchable and/or

stored on said database.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 22, line 16, as follows:

~~A~~ In one embodiment, a number of core steps are applicable to compiling and using a database for different applications. A first user entity inputs the details of all the entities (i.e. their friends, colleagues, family or anyone else they value in some way) they believe would be willing to be recorded on the database as chosen individuals, and specifies their e-mail address as their identifying characteristic and optionally `friend` as the link between the parties.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 23, line 6, as follows:

In one embodiment, said searchable access is available only to prescribed ~~users~~ entities.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 23, line 13, as follows:

According to one aspect of the present invention, individual ~~users~~ entities may chose to optionally restrict access to part or all of their stored data in their entity data record to other ~~users~~ entities with particular identifying characteristics, supplementary attributes and/or entity attributes.


Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 23, line 16, as follows:

In this manner, entities are able to alter their searchable details according to different applications--for example, an individual may be willing to be contacted by any search looking for photography enthusiasts but does not want unrestricted access to the fact they work for ~~an~~ a genetic research laboratory.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 23, line 20, as follows:

Potential users of such a system can be reassured that they will be included in a unique, private personal <u>social</u> network whereby only others with a common <u>connection</u> ~~link~~ (e.g. friends, friends of friends, or friends of friends of friends and so forth) will be able to access their personal details if they chose to make them available.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 24, line 1, as follows:

Furthermore, the system does not necessarily require the user <u>entity</u> to make contact with an entity located through a search of the system database. Instead, the system provides a means of informing the user <u>entity</u> of the existence of the <u>located entity</u> together with the knowledge of a common link, e.g. a shared mutual acquaintance.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 24, line 7, as follows:

Preferably, the system allows user access across a network, including the Internet, an intranet; wide and local area networks; a telephone or pager networks, telephone-based text-messaging or facsimiles; automated ~~mailserver~~ <u>mail-server</u> systems; power transmission networks, wireless networks; networks comprised of other telecommunication links: postal or courier services and the like.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 24, line 14, as follows:

The present invention enables information flow not only between immediate acquaintances, but also with the subsequent tiers of entity acquaintances, e.g. friends of friends, friends of friends of friends, and beyond<u>,</u> to include even larger domains <u>of</u> entities. The core principles and elements of the invention, namely the ability to transfer information within a

social network whose members are directly or indirectly known to the user, giving an interrelationship context to any information transfer, may be applied a diverse range of applications without need to adapt the principles of operation.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 24, line 21, as follows:

Multiple applications may be derived using a database comprised of data from the same entities by utilising different aspects of the entity interrelations. Moreover, the present invention enables ~~users~~ entities to record information about themselves and apply selective screening on who else may view the information, and from whom they obtain information.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 25, line 1, as follows:

In one embodiment, a user entity may choose or be assigned (by the system or another entity) a role in an application, or a said predetermined activity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 25, line 21, as follows:

The system may also be used to reward ~~users~~ user entities for their contribution in a predetermined activity such as linking potential employer with an appropriate employee. Thus, according to one embodiment, a reward is provided to an entity according to their success in fulfilling their designated role in a predetermined activity.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 26, line 4, as follows:

According to a further aspect of the present invention, said system includes;

at least one host computer processor connectable to one or more network(s),

a database accessible over said network(s),

a plurality of data input devices connectable to said network(s),

wherein said system is capable of forming said unique private personal <u>social</u> network

for each of one or more ~~users~~ <u>user entities</u> by receiving input from the ~~said~~ user <u>entity</u> including

at least one identifying characteristic of the user <u>entity</u> and of one or more chosen entities known

to said user,

recording said identifying characteristic of each entity including the user to form one or

more corresponding entity data records in said database,

notifying the or each chosen entity of their recordal on said system and requesting input

of at least one identifying characteristic of one or more further entities known to the or each said

chosen entity,

recording the identifying characteristic of each further entity inputted by the or each said

chosen entity to form further corresponding entity data records,

repeating the above steps of successive notification of further entities and recordal of the

identifying characteristic of each further entity chosen as further entity data records,

providing searchable access to at least part of the entity data records stored in said

database.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 27, line 10, as follows:

According to one embodiment, entities stored on said database may be periodically

provided with indicative information relating to additional new entities with ~~a~~ <u>an</u> entity attribute

matching that recorded in the entities user data record, which have been inputted to the system

since the entities' last system access and/or said automated periodic update.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 28, line 1, as follows:

As potential users of this system may be reluctant to disclose some or all of the various entity attributes, identifying characteristics, supplementary attributes referred to above, a variety of incentives or reassurances may be provided according to the nature of the ~~application~~ system. In a relationship/romantic ~~application~~ implementation, a means of indirectly assessing the potential suitability of an individual for a relationship of some kind may be garnered by considering the prospective individual's response or opinion to various neutral or non-threatening issues, such as the user's favourite joke, quote, movie and the like.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 28, line 24, as follows:

The present invention enables a more systematic access to the opinions, knowledge, ~~contacts,~~ recommendations and so forth of an extended network of contacts than would otherwise be possible without endlessly disturbing each contact.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 29, line 2, as follows:

Applications most suited for implementation of the present invention are characterised by;

a high reliance on personal ~~contacts~~ relationships;

a significant need/problem to solve;

a need to access an extended social, business, recreational, cultural or other restricted network but not the general public;

networks with a large number of people;

high inter-personal information flows; and/or

a large number of people to co-ordinate; and/or

the network members have insufficient time available to perform all their desired

activities, or have insufficient time to communicate with or maintain connections with their personal contacts.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 30, line 5, as follows:

It can be thus seen that individual industries may adapt the present invention to their own peculiarities and characteristics. Personal or organisation networks are utilised by each Industry in different ways and to varying degrees. A Share broker and Venture Capitalists would use personal networks, though in a distinct manner and purpose. Nevertheless, by identifying what the unique, private personal <u>social</u> networks are used for, and the different roles played by individuals/organisations (i.e. entities) in the industry, the present invention may be adapted to enhance individuals/organisations effectiveness.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 30, line 16, as follows:

Using the Venture Capital example again, personal <u>social</u> networks may be used in a variety of tasks--some industry specific, some generic commercial tasks. These may range from senior executive recruitment, seeking specialized co-investment partners, conducting technical due diligence to ordering office supplies. However, in each instance, the present invention may be used to compile, maintain and update their list of contacts.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 31, line 1, as follows:

A key benefit of the present invention is the ability to layer information requests or dissemination with the user's extended <u>social network of</u> contacts ~~network~~ according to the user's purpose. If an individual is embarking on a project requiring diverse and/or specialist input, then information requests may be restricted from clearly uninterested contacts. Thus, an individual

27

organizing a working-party detail at a remote club ski-field for example, would exclude contacting any non-local individuals.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 31, line 13, as follows:

A venture capitalist thinking of investing in a biotechnology project may only notify specific entities within their network. However, the same individual may want include different friends and colleagues in your "romance" and "employment" ~~applications~~ <u>situations</u>.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 32, line 22, as follows:

In one embodiment therefore, the present invention records a ~~user's~~ <u>user entity's</u> recommendations regarding consumer items and/or services as part of the user's data record.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 33, line 8, as follows:

Alternatively, the service and/or product providers receive a predetermined number of recommendations without charge after which they are invited to pay a fee to be maintained as a searchable term on the database. In use for example, a user <u>entity</u> may know his close friend has a particular brand washing machine. The user <u>entity</u> may then search to see who else has that particular machine rather than asking all his contacts on the database what washing machine they posses.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 34, line 11, as follows:

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of creating a unique, private personal <u>social</u> network for a user <u>entity using</u> ~~in~~ a system as described

above, including <u>at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a</u>

<u>database accessible over said data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to</u>

<u>said data network,</u> ~~the steps performed by a processor of a data processing and storage system, of:~~

~~receiving input from the said user including at least one identifying characteristic of the~~

~~user and of one or more chosen entities known to said first entity;~~

~~recording said identifying characteristic of each entity including the user to form one or~~

~~more corresponding entity user data records in said database;~~

~~notifying the or each chosen entity of their recordal on said system and requesting input~~

~~of at least one identifying characteristic of one or more further entities known to the or each said~~

~~chosen entity;~~

~~recording the identifying characteristic of each further entity inputted by the or each said~~

~~chosen entity to form further corresponding entity data records;~~

~~repeating the above steps of successive notification of further entities and recordal of the~~

~~identifying characteristic of each further entity chosen as further entity data records;~~

~~providing searchable access to at least part of the entity data records stored in said~~

~~database~~

<u>said system being configured by said method to provide each user entity with a virtual,</u>

<u>unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts, being</u>

<u>entities connected directly or indirectly to a user entity, said method including the steps of:</u>

<u>said system receiving a user entity data input including at least one identifying</u>

<u>characteristic of the user entity and recording said data input in a corresponding entity data</u>

<u>record;</u>

<u>said system receiving a further user entity data input including at least one identifying</u>

<u>characteristic of one or more entities known directly or indirectly to said user entity and chosen</u>

by said user entity for invitation to the user entity's social network as a contact;

communicating said invitation to said chosen entities;

recording each consenting entity accepting said invitation as a new contact connected to the user entity and storing at least the identifying characteristic of each new contact in a corresponding database entity data record;

repeating the above steps for each consenting entity to create corresponding individual, unique, private, personnel social networks, collectively forming a plurality of social networks on said system, inter-connected by mutually connected contacts; and

providing searchable access to at least part of the entity data records stored in said database.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 36, line 1, as follows:

Three key platform and ~~application~~ implementation extensions are provided to extend social networks into the mobile environment: Mobile Notification Services, Data Application Services, and Location-Based Services.

Please delete page 38, line 1, through page 40, line 1, in its entirety.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 40, line 2, as follows:

The present invention relates generally to a means of harnessing the discriminatory powers of the knowledge, opinions and recommendations of an entities extended network of contacts in an efficient and systematic manner and without irritating or alienating members of the network. There are numerous potential ~~applications~~ implementations for the present invention of which the examples described in more detail below are by way of illustration only.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 40, line 10, as follows:

The term `entity` or `entities` includes any individual, family, organisation, club, society, company, partnership, religion, or the like that exists as a particular and discrete unit. However, though for the sake of clarity and convenience the term individual or user <u>entity</u> (as appropriate) is used in the following examples, this does not restrict the present invention to same.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 40, line 15, as follows:

The computer system (1) includes a host computer in the form of an internet web server (2), containing a processor (3) connectable to a network, in particular the internet (4), a database (5) accessible over said network and a plurality of data input devices, represented by user <u>entity</u> computers (6, 7).

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 41, line 1, as follows:

The present invention provides system providing one or more ~~users~~ <u>user entities</u> with a unique, private personal <u>social</u> network formed from <u>connections between</u> contacts ~~with one or more~~ <u>being</u> entities <u>connected</u> ~~known~~ directly or indirectly to the user.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 41, line 4, as follows:

Thus, the present invention is particularly suited to implementation in a variety of ~~applications~~ <u>implementations</u>, including, as an example, a relationship service to facilitate the introduction of individuals from a user's unique, personal private network. In dating-type service or system embodiment, the users would be drawn from friends or friends of friends, or even optionally friends of friend of friends and so forth.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 41, line 20, as follows:

It will be appreciated that the same principals of using an extended <u>social</u> network of acquaintances as a means of locating a particular individual can be extended to a plurality of non-romance related areas. As an example, people seeking a particular type of tradesman such as an electrician, confronted by a potentially random choice from listings in a phone book would often be very willing to choose an electrician recommended by a friend. The principle is equally applicable across a huge range of human activities/endeavours and is a fundamental feature of many societies.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 42, line 5, as follows:

FIG. 2 show a flow diagram symbolising the implementation of the present invention of the system (1) as shown in FIG. 1, wherein an individual having an extended personal <u>social</u> network of friends wishes to identify potential relationships from within said network.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 42, line 15, as follows:

As discussed above, in the present embodiment, the system (1) is primarily directed towards a single application<u>-specific system</u>, i.e., to facilitate romantic relationships between individuals, and the website (10) and associated correspondence/communication between the users will reflect this single purpose. It is therefore not necessary for the user to specifically record the reason/object for using the service, nor any entity attributes (13) of the individuals stored in their respective data records (12).

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 45, line 8, as follows:

It should understood that the system (1) does not specifically require the ~~users~~ user entities to contact each other via the internet, rather, it provides the information required (e.g. a common friend) to contact an individual with whom the inquirer is known to share a common link.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 45, line 11, as follows:

Even though many ~~users~~ user entities may find e-mail to be a convenient means of contact, there is nothing precluding the use of the telephone, letter writing, personal contact or any of the `conventional` means already available to the public. Such contact details may simply be recorded as part of the data (12) records and made searchable to prescribed users.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 45, line 20, as follows:

Secondly, the system does not rely on the ~~users~~ user entities inputting large amounts of personal and potentially private information into a database over which they have no access control. Many users may feel less threatened by recording the minimal information needed on the database (5), particularly with the reassurance that the information is only viewable by friends or friends of friends (or friends of friends of friends).

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 46, line 4, as follows:

Eligible individuals, i.e. single friends meeting a particular search criteria may be listed with the along with the path of referring friends to provides a sense of context and background information. User entities can be provided with the option of whether they want their referring friends to be `attached` to them in this manner.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 46, line 10, as follows:

~~Users~~ User entities may customise the format of the e-mail notifications (14) to suit their own tastes. As will be seen in the outline of the service (15) shown in FIG. 3, there are two drop-down boxes to enable the user to customise the characterising description of the service and the salutation with the minimum of effort.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 46, line 14, as follows:

If a user entity dislikes a particular individual within an extended network of friends, they may deny to access of their individual data details during any search of the database (5) conducted by said particular individual (or not accept a link to them in the database (5) at all).

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 47, line 5, as follows:

A further variant of this feature is to periodically notify a user entity of all the other individuals who have registered and who want to refer to the user as their friend.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 47, line 19, as follows:

The entry of an expanded list of identifying characteristics/entity attributes (11, 13) as referred to above can enable the ~~service users~~ user entities to contact other people for non-romantic purposes. This may range from golfers seeking like-minded playing partners to lawyers seeking reliable associates in overseas jurisdictions.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 48, line 5, as follows:

The present invention is readily adaptable to such relationships, and in fact, may be utilised in facilitating interaction between parties in almost any sphere of human activity,

34

provided the parties share a common ~~contact~~ <u>connection</u> (either directly or indirectly) with an

entity which is respected by the ~~said~~ parties.



Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 47, line 5, as follows:

As discussed, ~~industry~~ specific applications may be formed from the core features set of

features of the present invention.



Please amend Table 1, which begins on page 48, line 11, as follows:

| Application | Problem solved | Roles | Application-specific factors |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Employment | Finding high quality people for jobs at a low cost | Employer, Employee, Facilitator/link, Seeker/candidate , Recruiter | Best employees and or jobs are often found through the referrals of   friends and colleagues |
| Romance | Finding a partner | Single, Facilitator/Link | The majority of people find their partner via common friends and colleagues |
| Flatmate (Roomate) finder | Finding a trustworthy and interesting person to live with | existing flatmates, New flatmates, Facilitator/Link | It is better to choose someone you ~~patriotically~~ know compared to an advertisement in the paper where you do not know the person at all |
| Investment opportunities | Finding investors with skill and desire to invest in particular areas | Offerer, Investor, Consultant, Facilitator /Link | A large proportion of private equity is placed via personal networks and would benefit from a more systematic system.<br><br>An optional additional requirement is the person posting the investment opportunity gives specific approval to each entity in the personal network wanting to view the information |
| Recommendation engine for movies, books, plays etc | Finding good entertainment | Reviewer, Link/facilitator, Entertainment seeker | Friends often ask, "have you seen any good movies, read any good books" and this makes it easy to see what people think is interesting and worthwhile. |
| Event manager | Way for people to organize gathering and find people to make up numbers | Organizer, participant, Facilitator/link, person with | When organizing sports teams etc it is time consuming to call around a see if everyone can make it. |

| | | interests | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | This service may be configured to cease issuing invitations to the event after a defined number of people had confirmed their attendance. |
| Service and product recommendation engine | Way to find good product and services to buy and those to avoid | Service/product provider, consumers, Facilitator/link | This provides an alternative to scanning telephone or trade directories for product or providers.   Users prefer recommendations from their personal network of contacts. |
| Academic collaboration | Way to keep up to date in a research field | Academics, Facilitator/links | There are numerous ways academics use networks to collaborate on performing, writing up and presenting research. This helps them |
| Contact manager | Keeping your contact information of friends and colleagues up to date | Friends and colleagues | This <u>feature</u> ~~application~~ could sync your local address book with an online one. Because you are linked to your friends via the social network when they change their contact details it updates them online and then updates them on your local computer when they sync the address books. You will always have their updated contact information |
| Business problem solving | Way to find information from business colleagues and share information | Question askers, question answerers, moderators | When you have a specific problem you often ask colleagues for the answer or who to go to for the answer. With this service you can sign up to different areas of interest and choose what discussions you want to participate in based on your network of colleagues. |
| Finding company Directors | Find trusted business people for this role in companies | Potential directors, Boards seeking directors | These positions are often filled via word of mouth.   The present invention would make the process more systematic |
| Spam filtering | Problem of receiving unsolicited emails | | Emails that come from your extended network of contacts could automatically be a higher priority than other email.<br><br>Email that comes from addresses that is not part of *any* trusted network would be further lowered in priority (defined as spam). |
| Car pooling | Finding someone to share a ride with either for commuting or other purposes | Drivers, travelers | Generally people prefer to share a car with someone they trust than a total stranger. |
| Generating sales leads | Finding people in companies through mutual contacts that | Sellers, potential customers, Facilitator/links | Often sales leads are generated through mutual contacts. |

| | can help with the sales process | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Real Estate | Finding good tenants for properties | Landlord, tenants, Facilitator/links | Landlords prefer to have tenants they can trust and they would prefer to have people that are part of their extended network of contacts. Similarly tenants may prefer a trustworthy landlord |
| Travel Organizer | Find good places to stay and things to do when you travel | Traveler, travel supplier, Facilitator/links | |
| Babysitting | Finding a good babysitter | Babysitter, caregivers, Facilitator/links | |
| House sitting | Find someone to look after your house when you are away | House owner, house sitter, Facilitator/link | |
| Classifieds | Buy sell or trade property, products, and services | Buyer, seller, Facilitator/link | |
| Sharing private peer-to-peer content | Share your content with selected degrees of your contacts | Provider / requester | Many people create or share content with others but do not want to use traditional peer-to-peer systems which are open and subject to abuse. |

Please delete the Abstract on page 73 in its entirety, and add the following new Abstract set forth on the next page:

ABSTRACT

A social network system and method of operation, including at least one host computer processor connectable to at least one data network, a database accessible over the data network, and a plurality of data input devices connectable to the data network. The system is configured to provide each user entity with a virtual, unique, private, personal, social network formed from connections between contacts. The contacts are entities connected directly or indirectly to a

user entity.   The social network further provides respective interrelationship context information

associated with a connection between at least two contacts and/or between a contact and the user.